



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Board Proclaims World Sickle Cell Day

Four years after the United Nations recognized Sickle Cell Disease as a world-wide public health epidemic, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors continues to raise awareness about the debilitating condition. In keeping with its ongoing efforts, the Board today approved a motion by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas proclaiming June 19, World Sickle Cell Day in Los Angeles County.

Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is a hereditary disorder named for the abnormal, sickle shape of red blood cells, which are impaired as they carry oxygen through the body. Millions of people with SCD endure symptoms such as bone, gallbladder, and lung infections, shortness of breath, and bouts of extreme pain. Treatment currently consists of managing and controlling the symptoms with medications.

The disease is particularly common among people with ancestry from sub-Saharan Africa, South America, Caribbean nations, Mediterranean countries, India, and Saudi Arabia.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 90,000 to 100,000 people in the United States are living with SCD, and one in every 500 African-American babies and one out of every 36,000 Hispanic-American babies is born with the disease.

The Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center is working to cure SCD and has developed a clinical trial for a promising new drug treatment involving the oral administration of L-glutamine, the most common

amino acid in the body. The clinical trail is currently being used by researchers throughout the United States for sickle cell treatment.

“Despite medical advances, we are still in search of a cure for Sickle Cell Disease,” said Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. “It is my hope that by increasing attention, awareness and community focus on this issue, we will one day have effective remedies for an illness that affects thousands of families in Los Angeles County, the nation, and the world.”

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas introduced the motion at the request of the Health Committee of the Empowerment Congress, a grassroots organization of neighborhood groups, residents, nonprofit organizations, business, religious institutions, and community leaders.

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